

School of Theology at Claremont



1001 1406102



RESTFULNESS
OF CHRIST BY
C.H. MORRISON. M. A

BX
9178
M6
R38

THE SILENT HOUR BOOKLETS



The Library

SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
AT CLAREMONT

WEST FOOTHILL AT COLLEGE AVENUE
CLAREMONT, CALIFORNIA



295

THE RESTFULNESS
OF CHRIST

PRINTED IN THE CITY OF LONDON
AT THE EDINBURGH PRESS

78
6
38

Sermons

**THE RESTFULNESS
OF CHRIST † † †
AND THE UNSEEN VISION
BY G. H. MORRISON, M.A**



**THE SILENT HOUR
BOOKLETS**



HODDER & STOUGHTON

Theology Library

SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
AT CLAREMONT
California

The Restfulness of Christ *agf*

"He rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm."—MATT. viii. 26.

THERE are some people whom we meet with as we journey who impress us with a sense of restfulness. Such people, not infrequently, are men; more often, if I mistake not, they are women. They are not necessarily brilliant, nor have they any striking or unusual gifts: all we feel is that in their company there is a pleasant atmosphere of restfulness. We are all tempted to strain after effect sometimes, but in the presence of these people we do not think of

Restfulness

The Restfulness of Christ

The unrestfulness
of the weak

that. There is no effort to keep up conversation. We are not ashamed even of being silent. Like a breath of evening after the garish day, when coolness and quiet have followed on the sunshine, such natures, often we know not how, enwrap us with a sweet sense of rest.

And you will find, as your survey of life broadens, that people who are weak never create that atmosphere. There may be many vices in the strong, but there is always something unrestful in the weakling. We talk of the restfulness of the calm summer evening, and unhappy is the man who never feels it. But we know now how at the back of that there is the stress of conflict and the strain of battle. And so in the people who are full

The Restfulness of Christ

of restfulness, could we read the story of their lives, we should find the record of many a hard battle, and the tale of many a well-contested field. I do not mean that they have done great deeds. I do not mean that they have suffered terribly. The greatest victories are not spectacular, nor is there any crowd to cheer the combatant. I only mean that people who are restful are people who have looked facts in the face; who have toiled, when there was not much light to toil by, and carried their crosses in a smiling way. There is never any rest in weakness. To be weak is miserable, doing or suffering, says Milton. The condition of all restfulness is power of the open-eyed and quiet heroic kind. And probably that is why people who are

To be weak is
miserable

The Restfulness of Christ

"I will give
you rest."

restful are at the same time delightfully subduing; for there is nothing so subdues a man as power, save the apotheosis of power, which is love.

Now no man can reasonably doubt that Jesus was pre-eminently restful. Whenever I peruse the gospel story, I am impressed by the restfulness of Christ. One of the first invitations which He gave was this: "Come unto Me and I will give you rest." One of the last promises before the cross was this: "My peace I give unto you." And though there are depths in the peace of Jesus Christ, that reach to the deepest abysses of the soul, yet the words would have been little else than mockery had the Christ not been wonderfully restful. Take a word like that of the

The Restfulness of Christ

Apostle Paul: "The Lord of peace give you peace alway." Down to the depths of the sin-pardoned soul you are still in the province of the benediction. But there never could have been that benediction unless the Lord, whom the church loved and worshipped, had impressed every one who ever met Him with the feeling of an infinitude of rest.

A new appeal
for Christ

And I cannot help thinking that if men realised that, it would constitute a new appeal for Christ. If I know anything about this present day, there is a craving in its heart for restfulness. Mr. Moody used to tell a story of a little child who was tossing and fretting in some childish fever. And its mother sang to it and told it stories, and the little child tossed and was fretful still. And then the mother stooped

The Restfulness of Christ

The strenuous
life

down without a word and gathered her little daughter in her arms, whereon the child, in an infinite content, said: "Ah, mother, *that's* what I wanted." She did not know what she wanted, like many wiser people; but like most of us, she knew it when she got it. And so to-day there are a thousand voices singing to us, and some perhaps telling stories. But it seems to me that the times are a little fevered, that the pulse is not beating steadily like our fathers', and that what we need in modern society is just the shadow and the space of rest. The strenuous life is being overdone. It is a little too strenuous to be strong. It is issuing, not in the dignity of manhood, but in the hustle of the modern market. And wise men everywhere

The Restfulness of Christ

are coming to see that we need a new ideal not less intense, but one that has ampler room within its borders for the fructifying pleasantness of rest.

The message
of Jesus

It is just here that, out of the mist of ages, there steps the figure of the Man of Nazareth. "Come unto Me and I will give you rest"—it is the message of Jesus for to-day. I want you to remember that these words were spoken to men and women whose burden was religion. It was the spirit of the age, charged with tradition, from which our Saviour offered them relief. And once again the spirit of the age demands an ideal that shall have room for rest, and standing among us is the restful Christ. Now if Christ had been an idle Oriental I should never have

The Restfulness of Christ

"I am the
Life"

pled His fitness for to-day. You will never transplant the dreamy idle East to the practical, vigorous, insistent West. But the continual wonder about Christ is this, that in every part and power of His being He was intensely and unceasingly alive with a vitality which puts us all to shame. Let a woman touch Him in the throng—"Who touched Me?" Let Him see a crowd, and He is "moved with compassion." Let Him be baited by the subtlest doctors, and He fences and parries with superb resource. In body and spirit, in will, emotion, intellect, Christ was so flooded with the tides of life, that when He cried to men, "I am the *Life*," they felt in a moment that the word was true. Yet, "Come unto Me and I will give

The Restfulness of Christ

you rest." That is the abiding mystery of Christliness. That is the secret we are hungering for to-day, how to engraft the strenuous on the restful. And you may laboriously search the ages, and all the ideals and visions of the ages, and never find these so perfectly combined as in the historic personality of Jesus. The East says, "Come, let us rest awhile; no need to hurry, and the sun is warm." And the West says, "Let us be up and doing," till we have almost lost the forest for the trees. And then comes Jesus, most superbly active, and toiling with an inspired assiduity, and yet in the very thick and tangle of it, girt with a restfulness that is divine.

Now when we study the life of Jesus Christ, we light on one or

The mystery of
Christliness

The Restfulness of Christ

The equipoise
of Christ

two sources of this restfulness. And in the first place it was the restfulness of balance. You remember how John in the Book of Revelation has a vision of the heavenly Jerusalem; and you remember how, as he surveys its form, he sees that the length and the breadth and the height of it are equal. It was symmetrical in every measurement—perfectly balanced in every dimension, and I challenge any man to read the gospel and not remark that equipoise in Christ. Ill-balanced men always make us restless; ill-balanced women do so even more. But to me at least, reading the life of Jesus, there comes such a sense of powers in perfect balance, that I accept with my heart the invitation, "Come unto Me and I will give you rest."

The Restfulness of Christ

Again it is the restfulness of purpose—of steady and unalterable purpose. There is no rest in the little Highland burn as it brawls and chafes along its bed of granite. It “chatters, chatters as it goes,” and chattering things and people are not restful. But the mighty river, silent and imperial, guiding its wealth of water to the sea, is like a parable of mighty purpose, and in the bosom of that purpose there is rest. There is something river-like about the life of Christ—it is so resistless in its flow. Sorrows or joys could no more stop His course than the lights and shadows on the hills can stop the Clyde. And in this mighty purpose, so deep and so divine, there lies not a little of the secret of the un-failing restfulness of Christ. Why

Christ's divine
purpose

The Restfulness of Christ

the beat of under-
lying purpose

is it that young men are so restless? And why is there generally more repose as life advances? It is not merely that the fires are cooling; it is that life is settling into a steadier aim. No longer do we beat at doors that will not open—no longer does every bypath suggest dreams—we have found our work and we have strength to do it, and in that concentration there is rest. Now in the life of Jesus Christ there is always the beat of underlying purpose. No life was so free or so happily spontaneous. To call it cribbed, cabined, and confined were mockery. Yet underneath its gladness and its reach, and all the splendour and riches of its liberty, there is a burning and dominating purpose, and in the bosom of that purpose

The Restfulness of Christ

is repose. It is a bad thing not to have a friend. It is a worse thing not to have a purpose. Something to love, to fight for, and to live for, and the world's redemption to achieve on Calvary, and I say that *that*, in the midst of all the tumult, was the strain of music whose echo was repose.

The restfulness
of trust

Then lastly it was the restfulness of trust. Christ had repose because He trusted so. Faithlessness, even in the relationships of earth, is the lean and hungry mother of unrest. Let a mistress once distrust her maid and there will be worrying suspicion every day. Let a husband distrust his wife, a wife her husband, and the peace of home, sweet home, is in its ashes. We charge this with being a restless age, and we lay the blame of that

The Restfulness of Christ

Trust in
God

restlessness on love of pleasure, but I question if it be not lack of faith that is the true root of social instability. To me the wildest little child is restful, and it is restful because it trusts me so. Faith is the great rebuke of boisterous winds when the ship is like to be swamped in angry waters. And the perfect restfulness of Jesus Christ, in a life of unceasing movement and demand, sprung from a trust in God that never faltered even amid the bruising of the cross.

The Unseen Vision

"I Daniel alone saw the vision: for the men that were with me saw not the vision."—DAN. x. 7.

CYRUS had been king of Babylon three years when this revelation was vouchsafed to Daniel. In the first month, on the four-and-twentieth day of it, he had a vision of the eternal Son. He was walking and meditating by the river Hiddekel when there broke mysteriously on his gaze a Man, and this Man, as seen again in the Apocalypse, we know to have been the pre-existent Christ. He was clothed with linen as a priest is clothed. He was girded with gold as one on royal

The vision of Daniel

The Restfulness of Christ

The vision's
splendour

service. His body was as a beryl, and his eyes like fire, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude. And so overpowering in its glory was it all so suddenly and so divinely splendid, that the comeliness of Daniel was turned into corruption, and he retained no strength. No wonder that Daniel was profoundly astonished that no one had seen the vision but himself. "I Daniel alone saw the vision, for the men who were with me saw it not."

That circumstance at once suggests to me that vision is not conditioned by locality. Daniel and his friends were all in company by the banks of the river Hiddekel that evening. *There* was the river, broad, still, magnificent. There were the plains, and far away the hills. And

The Restfulness of Christ

the birds cried, and the reeds by the water whispered, and faintly from a distance, came the stir of Babylon. It was the same murmur that fell on every ear. It was the same scene that opened on every eye. Now if what a man saw depended on environment, there would have been no one blind by Hiddekel that night. On every eye of that little strolling company would have flashed the shining vision of Christ. But "I Daniel alone saw the vision, for the men that were with me saw it not."

The blindness of
the world

The same thing meets us in life on every hand; meets us, for instance, in the case of poets. Set down a poet on any spot on earth, no matter how bleak and barren be the place, and he will enmantle it with gold and glory, and have his vision in it of all lovely things.

The Unseen Vision

The visions of
the poets

David Gray* spends his childhood by the Luggie, and the Luggie makes music for him like any fount on Helicon. Tannahill goes out in the evening to Gleniffer Braes, and they kindle his heart into the flame of song. The Ettrick Shepherd moves on the lonely hills, but in every glen is the flash of mystic figures. And Robert Burns has thoughts too deep for tears as he lovingly haunts the windings of the Doon. Were these men alone as they walked by their river Hiddekel? Were there no other shepherds

*I have designedly chosen illustrations which would appeal to a West of Scotland audience; but I cannot help thinking that David Gray has not yet come to his own. In *The Luggie and Other Poems* there is poetry of the finest kind. On Gray's short and sad life, see *David Gray and Other Essays* by Robert Buchanan, and *Buchanan's Life* by Harriet Jay.

The Unseen Vision

in Ettrick than James Hogg? Ah, it is not the place that makes the difference; it is the heart that beats upon the place. I Daniel, I Burns, I Tannahill—I, walking through this wonderful world—I saw the vision, but the men who were beside me saw it not.

The visions of
social reformers

The same thing, again, is very true of pioneers in social reform. All their achievement runs right back to this, that they alone had the vision by the river. I can picture the first poor homeless waif who arrested the gaze of a Dr. Barnardo. Many an eye had glanced at him that night; and some had bidden him move on, and some had pitied him; but "I Daniel alone saw the vision," and it was the vision that made all the difference. A vision of that boy clothed and

The Restfulness of Christ

The heart
that sees

redeemed, engirdled by the ministries of love; a vision of the boy out on the fields of Canada, with the wind of the hills and the sunshine on his cheek. And thousands passed the waif, hurrying along, bent on the business or revelry of Babylon; but the men that were with him did not see the vision. We talk with a certain contempt about the visionary, and the man who is *merely* a visionary is contemptible. But all great movements for bettering mankind have begun not in a brain that schemed, but in a heart that saw. And it is because the others by the river see everything save the vision of the Daniel, that social toilers have been laughed to scorn, till some of them have been broken-hearted.

The same thought also serves to

The Restfulness of Christ

illuminate much of the heroism that men display in suffering. How we conduct ourselves in days of strain very largely depends on what we see. I heard the other day of an old man who was dying of an excruciating trouble. And his minister, doing his poor best to comfort him, said, "Courage, friend, you will soon be in heaven." "Why, sir," said the old saint, "what do you mean? I've been in heaven for twenty years." *That* was the secret of the heroic courage that amazed the world in the early Christian martyrs. That was why tender women and fond mothers could sacrifice everything they loved for Christ. It was not that they were stronger than the heathen; but it was that they saw more than the heathen—they saw through the veil into another king-

In heaven for
twenty years

The Unseen Vision

The fortitude of
the visionary

dom, where Christ was enthroned at the right hand of God. I stood a few months ago in one of those amphitheatres* where the Christian martyrs used to be put to death. It was a little worn by the storms of countless years, but so perfect that bull-fights are still held in it. And as I pictured the thousands who once filled these seats and gazed on the battle with the wild beasts below, I thought how perfectly they could see everything, except the one thing that made all the difference. The crowds that were gathered there saw not the vision. They saw not the Man girt with the golden girdle. And so they were amazed that some poor slave should put their philosophers to shame in fortitude.

*At Nîmes.

The Unseen Vision

This, too, is pre-eminently true of Christ. It helps us better to comprehend His loneliness. If He was separated from His race by being sinless, He was separated not less by what He saw. Jesus often complained that men were *blind*—as if in that there lay all manner of evil; and how blind they must have seemed to Him we may conjecture when we remember that He saw a kingdom in a mustard-seed. One day when He was seated at a meal there entered a woman who began to anoint His feet; and the men who were seated with Him said, “If He but knew—if He only knew that creature as we do!” But Christ did more than know, Christ had a vision of her, pardoned, restored, rebeckoned to her womanhood; and the men who were with Him

Christ did more
than know

The Restfulness of Christ

Character the secret
of vision

at the feast saw not the vision. We talk of seeing eye to eye with anybody; but no one ever saw eye to eye with Christ. He saw such heights and depths and undiscovered glories that, matched with His, the keenest eyes are blind. There is a deep sense in which that kingly vision has proved the regeneration of the world.

But there is another suggestion in the words; it is that the secret of vision lies in character. Why, think you, did these men who were with Daniel see nothing of the glory in the heavens? I shall advance two reasons for it, and so close.

In the first place, they were not on the path of duty. They had no business to be loitering by the Hiddekel. They should have been home in Jerusalem with the exiles

The Restfulness of Christ

who had returned, and who now were busy rebuilding the ruined city. What right had they to be lingering in Babylon? Why had they not crossed the desert with their countrymen? It was such a smooth and easy life in Babylon that they shirked the toil and the hardship of return. Daniel was there because God willed it so. The work of Daniel was by the side of Cyrus. And therefore Daniel had his vision there because he was in his God-appointed place. But those who were with him did not see the vision—no glory of Christ surprised them by the river—because they had chosen the life of selfish ease, in preference to the rougher path of duty.

What that means is that if we are false to duty, we may be certain we

The reason for
Daniel's vision

The Unseen Vision

Obedience shall never see the best. My finest holiday, Mohammed used to say, is the day on which I do my duty. Do you think that life is ever royal to the pleasure-seeker? Do you think that our smart society is really to be envied? The commonest day has something to reveal which it never shows save to the dutiful. "I am come to do Thy will, O God," said Christ, and that was the secret of His amazing vision. In every flower and in every heart there was a depth of meaning for Him because He was obedient. And so with us, if instead of seeking pleasures we seek to be quietly faithful in our place; if we will scorn delights and live laborious days, struggling to be true rather than to be happy; then all unexpectedly the clouds will break sometimes, and

The Unseen Vision

we shall hear strains of music unforgettable, and so shall we be stronger for the warfare, as knowing that we are not far from God. Sympathy

Then, in the second place, they did not see the vision because they felt not the burden and sorrows of Israel. That burden had well-nigh broken Daniel's heart, but there is no sign that it troubled them at all. For three weeks Daniel had mourned and fasted. For three weeks he had been praying for his people. In all their affliction Daniel was afflicted, crying to God for his unhappy countrymen. But the men who were with him had no such intense sympathy; there is not a trace that their hearts were torn for Israel; and so when the Lord of Israel appeared to Daniel, the men who were with him did not see the

The Restfulness of Christ

The saving
vision

vision. Must there not always be a preparation of that kind if we are to see the vision of Christ Jesus? It is when we feel the weight and guilt of sin that we realise our need of a Redeemer. The man who has seen the depths of his own heart, and known how tangled are the roots of evil, is ready for the appearing of the Lord, clad in the garments of His priestly office. That is one spiritual gain of passing years; they show us more plainly our utter need of Christ. Some one to die for us—some one to bear our guilt—I think we all come back to that at last. May each of us have that saving vision now, and again by the river to which we all are hastening—a river where on this side is farewell, and on the other the welcome of the morn.

Morrison, George Herbert, 1866-1928.

The restfulness of Christ : and The unseen vision / by G.H. Morrison. -- London : Hodder Stoughton, [19--?]

32p. ; 16cm. -- (The Silent hour booklets)

2 sermons.

1. Presbyterian Church--Sermons. I. Title.
II. Title: The unseen vision.

